

28. NOCTURNAL FEEDING BY WHITE-BELLIED DRONGO *DICRURUS CAERULESCENS*

Van Ashram situated on the outskirts of Sawai Madhopur city, has a Forest Rest House and a Range Office. A forest nursery is also present on the campus.

On May 14, 1999, while I was observing nocturnal animals in and around Van Ashram, at c. 2030 hrs, I came across three white-bellied drongos *Dicrurus caerulescens* hovering near an electric light bulb, in front of the Forest Rest House, devouring insects. All the three birds were perched on a wire. One more bird, feeding near another bulb, was perched on a bough of *Adansonia digitata*. I observed all the four birds up to 2200 hrs. When I left, they were still feeding. The following night, I saw perhaps the same birds feeding on flying insects.

Nocturnal feeding by black drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*, inside human habitation, has been reported by Khan (1990), Nameer (1990)

and Sharma (1991). The white-bellied drongo is more arboreal in nature than the black drongo, and it is a forest bird. It generally avoids human habitation. The gradual destruction of forests around the periphery of the expanding city and reduction in the food sources is perhaps forcing this bird to change its behaviour. Night light sources of the city attract huge insect populations from surrounding forest areas, with perhaps a resultant fall of insect density in surrounding forests. This in turn may lead to forest birds like the white-bellied drongos following their food resource for nocturnal feeding to the city.

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29. TOTAL ALBINISM IN A LARGE GREY BABBLER *TURDOIDES MALCOLMI*

On July 29, 2000, while I was surveying the biodiversity of Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, a milk-white large grey babbler *Turdoides malcolmi* caught my attention near Nandeshma village, on the outskirts of the Sanctuary. It was an adult bird with completely white plumage. The legs and bill were lighter than normal individuals. It was the only albino in a flock of eight birds.

When I approached the flock to get a photograph, the albino took off and hid in the foliage of a nearby mango tree, while the rest of the flock remained on the ground in a semi-alert posture. I waited motionless behind a *Butea monosperma* tree for the bird. When it came

down after a few minutes, I tried going near, but this time too it took refuge in the foliage of another tree. After a few minutes, it alighted on a rock near its flock and this time I could photograph it [photographic evidence given by the author — Eds]. I observed this bird for nearly 15 min and found it to be quite shy compared to normal individuals.

Albinism has been reported in crows (Mahabal 1991; Abdulla 1997), doves (Javed 1992; Pandya 1994), redwattled lapwing (Soni 1992), Asian koel (Shyamal 1990), little grebe (Bharos 1996), coot (Parasharya *et al.* 1996), red-vented bulbul (Soni 1992; Joshua 1996), lesser whistling-duck (Chatterjee 1995) and common

myna (Jha 1994). The large grey babbler is an addition to the list of albino birds, hence worth placing on record.

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30. YELLOW-RUMPED FLYCATCHER *FICEDULA ZANTHOPYGIA* IN KERALA

On January 30, 1996 along the Mangala Devi trail at Periyar National Park, Kerala, I encountered a female yellow-rumped flycatcher *Ficedula zanthopygia*. The bird spent most of its time between 5-10 m up in the mid-canopy of trees on the edge of the forest. I watched the bird for about 20 min ranging at c. 8 m. I was familiar with the species from China and Thailand, identified it quickly and confidently and, knowing that it was a vagrant to India, made a quick sketch and a few hurried field notes. Some of the notes are reproduced here.

It was a distinctive bird that could perhaps only be confused with the female of the Chinese-breeding form of Narcissus flycatcher *F. narcissina elisae*. However, *elisae* can be distinguished, among other features, by the lack of the conspicuous yellow rump of the aptly named yellow-rumped flycatcher.

DESCRIPTION

Estimated to be about 10% larger and noticeably bulkier, more plump, proportionately larger headed and heavier billed than a red-throated flycatcher *F. parva*.

The upperparts were a fairly uniform dull olive-green; the nape was subtly greyer and the rump, undoubtedly the bird's most striking feature, was bright lemon yellow. This was visible at rest, when the wings were frequently held drooped, but was most conspicuous during the bird's short flights. The upper border of the rump fell level with the tip of the bird's shortest tertial while the uppertail coverts (and tail) were blackish and contrasted sharply.

The head was quite well marked. The ear-coverts were slightly greyer than the crown and nape and there was a narrow off-white band